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BRIEFS

REGISTRATION OPENS FOR ANNUAL MEETING

PHOENIX (BP) — Registration opened Feb. 1 for the Southern Baptist Convention 2017 Annual Meeting June 13-14 at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Az. Registration will be available around the clock at SBCAnnualMeeting.net. (The appropriate church-authorized representative must complete all online messenger registrations.) Through online registration, each messenger will receive an eight-digit registration code to present at the annual meeting's Express Registration lane. Each cooperating church qualifies for two messengers, with up to 10 additional messengers available under certain stipulations.

ELECTIVE BIBLE COURSE CHALLENGED IN W.VA.

PRINCETON, W.Va. (BP) — The concept of Bible courses offered as electives in U.S. public schools is being tested after the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) announced it has filed a lawsuit on behalf of the parent of a kindergarten student to halt such classes in Mercer County, W.Va., Public Schools (MCPS). The course has been offered for 75 years in MCPS and is available at 19 elementary and middle schools, the FFRF said in its lawsuit. About 9,000 students are enrolled in MCPS, according to the school system's website.

NEW BIBLE FROM LIFEWAY COMING

NASHVILLE (BP) — LifeWay Christian Resources has announced the release of the Nashville-based Southern Baptist entity's new Christian Standard Bible (CSB) at CSBible.com, with print versions available in early March. As a revision of the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), the CSB balances linguistic precision to the original languages and readability in contemporary English. "We believe this is a translation that combines accuracy and readability without compromise," said Trevin Wax, Bible and reference publisher at B&H Publishing Group, part of LifeWay.

Carey remains open during rebuilding

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

William Carey University (WCU) has begun the long journey back from the devastating EF3 tornado that raked the Hattiesburg campus from one end to the other on Jan. 21. "I'm astounded," said WCU President Tommy King during a recovery team meeting on Jan. 20. "While our campus is closed at this time, William Carey University is up and running."

The school, which is affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention, did not incur any fatalities despite the magnitude of the storm, and the seven recorded injuries were non-life-threatening.

At least three Mississippi Baptist Convention member churches also sustained damage during the storm: Trinity Church, Petal; First Church, Petal; and New Testament Church, Hattiesburg.

In order for WCU students to complete the last two weeks of the winter trimester, many classes were moved to an online format. Classes that must meet face-to-face have been moved to the University of Southern Mississippi (USM), also in Hattiesburg, and to local churches that volunteered classroom space.

Existing online classes resumed their regular schedule last week and the College of



STORM'S AFTERMATH — Volunteers begin the massive cleanup process on the campus of William Carey University in Hattiesburg, shortly after the Baptist-affiliated school took a direct hit from an EF3 tornado on Jan. 21. (Photo by Davi Faria)

Osteopathic Medicine (COM) was up and running just a few days after the storm. That's because USM's nursing program recently occupied their new building, and the WCU medical school was able to move into the old USM nursing building.

The tornado damaged 90% of the buildings on WCU's campus,

but several classroom buildings and seven dorms are scheduled to be open when the spring trimester begins on Feb. 20.

Registration for the spring semester is continuing for current and new students, and the Admissions Office is also processing applications for the fall trimester.

Two of the women's dorms, Ross and Johnson halls, will have to be demolished as will the venerable campus landmark Tatum Court, built in 1914. Other casualties of the storm include an administration and classroom building.

see REBUILDING on p. 9

WMUs lend aid to Carey students

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP and local reports) — Children of missionaries (MKs) and international students attending tornado-ravaged William Carey University in Mississippi are being assisted by a \$5,000 HEART Fund grant from the national Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and the WMU Foundation, both in Birmingham.

see WMU on p. 9



HELPING HAND — The Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union/Women's Ministries (WMU/WM) hosted a luncheon in Hattiesburg sponsored by First Church, Jackson, to minister to William Carey University's children of missionaries students and international students affected by the Jan. 21 tornado that devastated the school's Hattiesburg campus. On hand were Cindy Townsend (seated, left), Miss. WMU/WM executive director/treasurer; Linda Donnell (back, fifth from right), Christian Women's Job Corps/Christian Men's Job Corps regional coordinator in Hattiesburg; and Gwen Williams (seated, right), Miss. WMU executive board member. (BR photo)

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

Be ready

The members of predominant African-American Mother Emanuel AME Church were doing what Christians are called to do. When the young, white man with the gym bag over his shoulder appeared inside the church asking to see the pastor, the members' first impulse was to welcome him and invite him to attend Bible study with them. He accepted their invitation. There Dylann Roof sat for nearly an hour with the pastor and church members. There he reached into his gym bag and pulled out a Glock .45 ACP pistol and began slaughtering those very church members, reloading his instrument of death at least five times, according to news reports.

The result was nine Christians killed, including the pastor. Why didn't the newspaper and television reports describe it that way? Why did the headlines report, "Nine people dead..." and "Nine church-goers were killed..."? Why were they so afraid to write, "Nine Christians were taken today while displaying the love of Christ?" Was it so hard to speak the truth, to say, "Christ followers died today following Christ?"

That's who they were, and that's what they were doing. It's an outrage that our society's obsession with political correctness won't allow them to be remembered that way, except among the apparently dwindling number of us who refuse to bow to political correctness. We should not allow the culture to minimize the cause for which they stood.

Roof's name has distastefully been much in the news again lately, as a jury of his peers found him guilty and imposed the death penalty for all 18 crimes for which he was eligible for capital punishment. Remarkably but in character for Mother Emanuel members, the families of the murder victims have made it clear that they forgive him and pray for his salvation before he meets his Maker.

There are many lessons that can be drawn from this painful experience. Here are just a few that come to mind.

■ Every church, no matter how insulated its members feel from the outside world ("That could never happen here."), should have a comprehensive and tested

security/safety plan that includes a response to such explosions of violence. Be prepared, and most likely such an incident can be stopped in its earliest stages.

GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, based in Dallas, has an excellent web page to help churches get started on their security/safety plan: guidestonepropertycasualty.org/Promotions/Safe-Secure-Sanctuary.

■ The Charleston gunman was apparently able to roam around the church for a considerable period of time, asking people about the pastor. Be sure church members know how to report suspicious behavior to someone in charge. It may amount to nothing, but they should feel comfortable doing so.

■ The pastor is almost always the focus of these gunmen. Pastor, don't try to be a hero. If the church has a security/safety plan as it should, the plan must include steps to remove the pastor from danger so the trained, pre-positioned emergency team can address the situation. It could be that the gunman's intentions can be completely thwarted if he is unable to locate his main target — the pastor.

■ The Charleston gunman was quickly captured before he could do more harm because of a sharp-eyed citizen who recognized his photograph. Why was there a clear photograph of the gunman available immediately? Because the church had a sophisticated camera surveillance system in place. That's a strong measure for all churches to consider.

■ Side note: Mass murders get all the attention, but a good security/safety plan will include provisions for fires, natural gas leaks, severe weather, medical situations, and other calamities that, while improbable, are still more likely to occur in church than a mass murder incident.

There's a lot to think about, but church leaders should do some thinking before the unthinkable happens. It's true that such preparations can run to some expense, but tragedies can happen and, as we know all too well, do happen.

Satan roams the earth, spewing evil and creating confusion for his own rebellious purposes. Make sure he has to bypass your church.

Watch that overcommitment

The first time I ever ate shark meat was at a Chinese restaurant in Mexico in 1991.

In attempting to show off in front of my new bride and demonstrate that I ate exotic stuff all the time, I stuck a huge piece of shark meat in my mouth. I had never had this before and knew nothing about the texture.

Let's just say, it was very chewy. I wound up eating on that piece of meat for quite a long time. Because I was too proud or embarrassed to spit the piece of shark meat out, I just kept chewing on it while the rest of my food got cold and my wife finished about half of her meal.

Many times in life, we bite off more than we can chew. Like me, we may be too proud or embarrassed to admit that we overcommitted ourselves — and will just continue to chew and chew and chew.

Some of us overcommit because we are unable to say no. Others do so because they feel that the job won't get done. Others overcommit because they are workaholics and don't realize they are only one person. As Christ followers, there are many good things including spiritual activities which constantly compete for our attention. It can be challenging to know when to say no.

There are many different plans or techniques that are useful in helping balance our yes and no commitments. As followers of Christ, we should always begin by committing or surrendering all that we do to the Lord (Pro. 16:3; Luke 12:23). After that, we can prioritize things by asking ourselves some questions, for instance:

■ How does this potential opportunity align with God's purpose and glory for my life?

■ Looking at my current schedule, can I manage this new opportunity and



Guest opinion
with John Weaver

do it well? Will I need to stop doing another commitment in order to make room for this new opportunity? If so, what will that be?

■ What concerns do I have? What will it cost me if I say yes, or what will it cost me if I say no?

■ Is this something that only I can do or could it be delegated? Is this someone else's responsibility or problem?

Overcommitting is not healthy for our physical, mental, or spiritual well-being. Learning when to say yes or no will be something we do all our lives.

I love the story in Exodus 18:13-26, when Jethro came to his son-in-law Moses and gave him some corrective advice when he saw Moses overdoing himself by trying to judge every single disagreement the people of Israel had with each other.

I laugh almost every time I read verse 18: "You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone."

That's good counsel. Don't overcommit yourself. It's not good for you or anyone else.

Weaver is a Christian life coach and pastor of Morse Mill Church in Dittmer, Mo. His commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.

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Nat Geo criticized for special gender issue

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — A nine-year-old boy who considers himself female is featured on the cover of the January 2017 issue of National Geographic, an entire issue dedicated to subjective gender identity primarily through the eyes of children while excluding biblical authority.

The idea of transgenderism, or gender fluidity, is itself a fallacy void not only of Scripture but also of science, Christian commentators told Baptist Press.

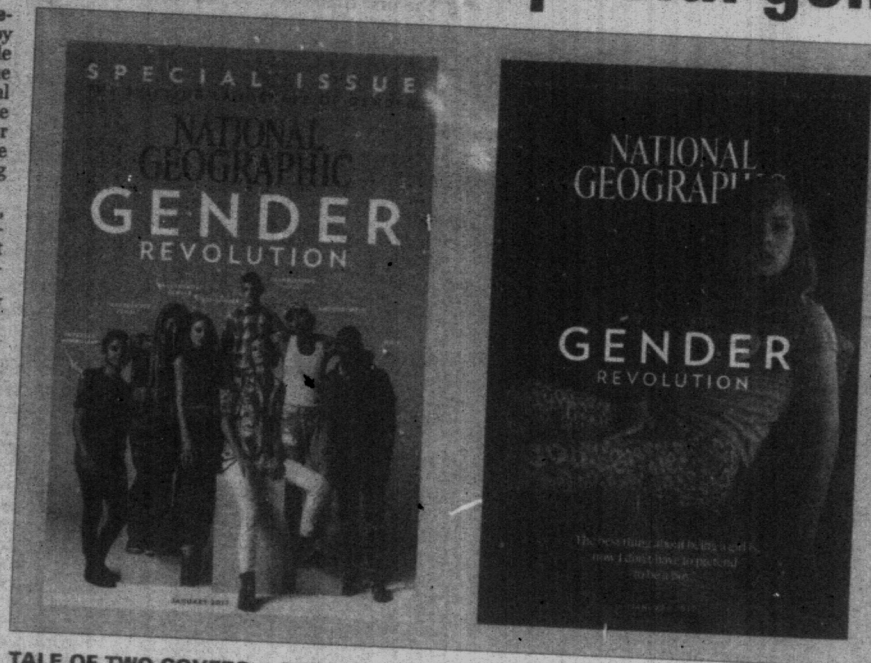
Glenn Stanton, director of family formation studies at Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, Co., and apologist Ken Ham, founder of Answers in Genesis in Petersburg, Ky., said the idea of gender fluidity is based in part on a person's flawed mental state.

One Million Moms, a Tupelo-based advocacy group affiliated with American Family Association that works to protect children from exploitation, is conducting a petition drive against the National Geographic issue.

National Geographic's special Gender Revolution issue pictures a seductively posed transgender child on the cover of the subscription copy available online. The newsstand copy has the same inside content as the subscription edition, but features a group of seven youth on its cover who self-identify with such descriptors as, "intersex nonbinary," "transgender female," "androgynous" and "bi-gender."

"It's just simply absolutely false and pure ideology that gender is fluid," Stanton said. Across human culture and history there are males and females. There is no science whatsoever that has determined a third or fourth or fifth gender."

Nearly all pre-adolescent children who are gender dys-



TALE OF TWO COVERS — Different covers for the January 2017 issue of National Geographic magazine, one for online subscribers and one for news stand customers, feature two genders. (BP photo/National Geographic photo)

phoric, or confused about their gender, revert to their biological sex by puberty, Stanton said, citing the statistic of 75% - 98%, based on studies.

Clinicians recommend that parents do not facilitate the transition of pre-adolescent children to the other gender, said Stanton, who has written and spoken extensively on gender identity.

Ham said he's not surprised National Geographic does not explore God's Word in the magazine. "They're really not out to discuss all the different

views and to put in what the biblical view is because they really want to impose a particular view on the culture, and the particular view they want to impose is [that] you can be anything you want, and... nobody can tell you that it's definitely male and female..."

One Million Moms condemns National Geographic's use of children in promoting a belief in gender fluidity. "Advocates for sexual confusion have quickly moved from using adults to promote their agenda to exploit-

ing children as the face of their cause," One Million Moms said in a press release.

Susan Goldberg, the National Geographic editor, should be ashamed of herself for using a young child in such an abusive manner. The overwhelming majority of doctors and psychiatrists label what this child is going through as gender dysphoria, and National Geographic is praising it as 'beautiful.'"

Goldberg said on the magazine's website that National Geographic has received nu-

merous comments about the issue. "Since we shared photos of the cover of our special issue on gender on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, tens of thousands of people have weighed in with opinions, from expressions of pride and gratitude to utter fury. More than a few have vowed to cancel their subscriptions."

Goldberg describes the biological boy on the cover as having "lived as an openly transgender girl since age five," and having "captured the complexity of the conversation around gender. ... Today, we're not only talking about gender roles for boys and girls — we're talking about our evolving understanding of people on the gender spectrum."

The magazine promotes its special issue as looking at the "cultural, social, biological, and personal aspects of gender," and includes interviews with children in 80 homes on four continents, according to a press release from National Geographic.

Ham said the growing acceptance of gender fluidity is a symptom of a culture that has taken the Bible out of public schools and promoted the theory of evolution, and also the result of the church being lax in teaching the truth of creation.

"I believe what we're seeing is, as a whole, the culture has abandoned God's Word," he observed. "God is turning this culture over to judgment and unfortunately there are tremendous consequences."

"Romans 1 makes it very, very clear that a sign God is turning a culture over to judgment is this increasing rejection of your fundamental sexual nature and not even just a rejection of it, but basically a celebration of [that rejection] because Romans 1 says they approve of these things."

Audience growing for Christian-based radio program

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) — Just a few days after getting out of an airplane seat on a long-haul flight back from Egypt, a Baptist pastor found himself sitting in a seat across the table from radio host Greg Davis.

Some might call it the hot seat, that little leather chair in the radio studio of WXJC in Birmingham, but the way Davis sees it, it's just a good place for a friendly discussion. On the day Davis talked with pastor Paul Brasher, the two spoke about the persecuted church in Egypt. Brasher shared about his opportunity to visit with a growing church that met in a garbage dump.

"The church over there, it's vibrant, it's growing," said Brasher, pastor of New Hope Church, Pell City.

That's encouraging, Davis said, and that's exactly the kind of thing the radio host wants listeners of his show, Priority Talk, to get to hear.

Davis, who also leads a student ministry called First Priority of Alabama, sits at that table five days a week and talks with pastors, authors, actors, musicians, and many others. He invites anyone who is interested to listen in.

"We try to bring the biblical or Christian worldview to whatever we talk about, no matter what kind of issue or topic it is," he said. That effort, plus the fact that he's riding a strong, 50,000-watt signal on FM radio, makes his talk show a desirable landing spot for guests — some of whom are household names in many Christian homes.

From Kirk Cameron to Squire Parsons, Mac Powell to James

Dobson, and pretty much every Southern Baptist Convention president from the past several years, Davis said he enjoys the variety of people with whom he gets to talk.

He also loves to feature Alabama pastors like Brasher. "We've got a national reach and nationally known names in here pretty often, but we are also definitely local. That sets us apart. If you're looking to hear about what's going on in the world from a different perspective than anywhere else, you'd enjoy listening to our program."

Priority Talk broadcasts Monday through Friday and Sunday in the Birmingham area, and is live online at prioritytalkradio.com. It also is available in podcast form on iTunes or on the show's website.



HITTING THE AIR — Greg Davis, host of Priority Talk Radio, said he "could've never fathomed" that the idea he had for a talk radio show about ministry would become an almost daily experience he's had for the past five years. (BP photo)

Speech becomes more corrupted in our culture with every passing day. You would think we might get used to some of it, but I confess to you that I still am shocked by some of the things I hear on public airwaves or see written or get sent to me in digital form. The new speech of so many people in our culture, whether it is in sounds or digital forms or signs, is vulgar, demeaning, degrading, improper, often gross, uncouth, nasty, locker room-ish, and even gutter talk.

Speech is powerful thing. In fact, the wise man of the Old Testament, Solomon, said life and death is in the power of the tongue. Today, with all the speech outlets we have, we can spread a lot of trash quickly and easily. It is taking place everywhere — in the schools; on the streets; in the newspapers; over the television and radio; and especially in social media. It is a part of many of our leaders as they deal with each other and even deal with us. The wrong kind of speech patterns and words are used to get attention and do harm and be dramatic. I have even heard from some pulpits words that, when used when I was in school, got folks sent to the principal's office. Yet they have become acceptable norms for many people.

Where did all this come from? To whom can it be attributed? Interestingly enough, some people trace it back to the first time a curse word was used on the national scene in the grand production of a movie called, *Gone with the Wind*. You know the famous quote where Clark Gable, the leading man, remarks at the end of the film, "Frankly, my dear, I really don't care." No, of course, he didn't say that. He said, "Frankly, my dear, I don't care," and I can't remember the rest of the quote. I'm not being a Puritan or squeamish about all this language stuff, but to



Speech

trace it back to there is to say there was a door opened that allowed people to feel they could repeat what was said on the big screen during a popular hit movie of the time.

There are things we say that we wouldn't say, but we're willing to quote somebody else saying it as if that makes it okay. It's not really okay, but that's the world we live in. The things that were said across the nation in the recent U.S. presidential campaign — the things the candidates said to each other, about each other, and behind each other's backs — helped move us down the line to new and lower levels away from gracious, thoughtful, and pure speech.

In recent days, the nationwide and international women's marches had offensive signs and speakers whose speech we need to guard children and young people from hearing. I didn't care about hearing it myself and though the women said they wanted to be equal with the men, I'm afraid that in fact they're getting there but they have had to take a long step down to get there.

Speech has become such a strange thing in the newly-developing parts of social media that at times I think I'm living on the edge of the Tower of Babel. There are things said or shown that I don't even know what they're talking about and when I ask what it's about, I wish I hadn't been told what it means.

It is disturbing. It is shocking, and with a few smirks and quirks it becomes a part of our national framework for speaking. It is not good. If you think that sounds old fashioned and out of touch with today's world, well, count me in. I do believe the Bible has something to say about how we speak and what it portrays and where it comes from in our lives. Proverbs 16:27 says, "An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire." The next verse says, "A forward [perverse] man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends."

Jesus tells us in Matthew 12:34 that it is out of the abundance of our hearts that words and expressions come from our mouths. The words you say, the

information you give, the expressions of your life, come out of the condition of your heart. The New Testament book of James has more to say about our speech and our tongues and lips, per verse, than any other book of the Bible. James warns us that we should not give our speech, our lips, our communication, to the things that are damning and damaging and hurtful and hateful.

I understand James knew nothing about computers or blogs or tweets or emails. He knew nothing about all the electronic stuff that can be instantly sent around the world, even anonymously, but what he did know was that the tongue is a powerful weapon and what you say can do great damage. His word was shaped like this, "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (James 3:5-6). Pretty descriptive stuff to help us understand the warped speech of our world today is not because of great intellectual advancements, but due to moral degradation that finds its way into our corrupt hearts and then exits through our mouths.

Can we change all of this in our world? Maybe not, but you and I can change it in our own lives and in relationships and in the way we go about expressing ourselves publicly, privately, to friends and family, and to people we don't even know. We can let the Lord shape and bless a communication that will be laced with love and redemptive nature to help those around us.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Just for the Record



FIRST CHURCH, FLORA, held its annual Sonshiners' Birthday Lunch celebrating the birthdays of all its members Jan. 10; Gil Powell, speaker.



The children of **TOPEKA CHURCH, JAYESS**, presented their Christmas program, *A Rockin' Royal Christmas With the King*, Dec. 18, 2016. Dale Authement, pastor.

Staff Changes



MOUNT VERNON CHURCH, LAUDERDALE, has called Paul Trospher as pastor. He is shown with his wife, Katrina, and sons Caleb and Gabriel.

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K = T

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John 17:25

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

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HANDBORO BAPTIST CHURCH IN GULFPORT IS SEEKING A PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC / CHOIR DIRECTOR. Send resumes to secretary@handborobaptist.org and Handboro Baptist Church Attn: Personnel Committee, 1421 E. Pass Road, Gulfport, MS 39507. Church phone # 228-896-3796

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Islamic extremist minority stirs up hatred in Uganda

AMURIA, Uganda (BP) — Islamic extremists ambushed a church leader in eastern Uganda last month after a young Muslim sheikh sent to assassinate him during worship instead accepted Christ, sources told Morning Star News.

Sunni Muslim extremists had sent the sheikh, an Islamic teacher trained in Islamic proselytization, to the Pentecostal Upright Church to kill pastor George Edweu. During Edweu's sermon on hearing and understanding the voice of God, the power of the Gospel convicted the sheikh of his sin, Edweu said.

News of the former sheikh's conversion shocked the community, and the 24-year-old newly converted Christian went into hiding. He, his wife, and two children ages two and four took refuge at an undisclosed location.

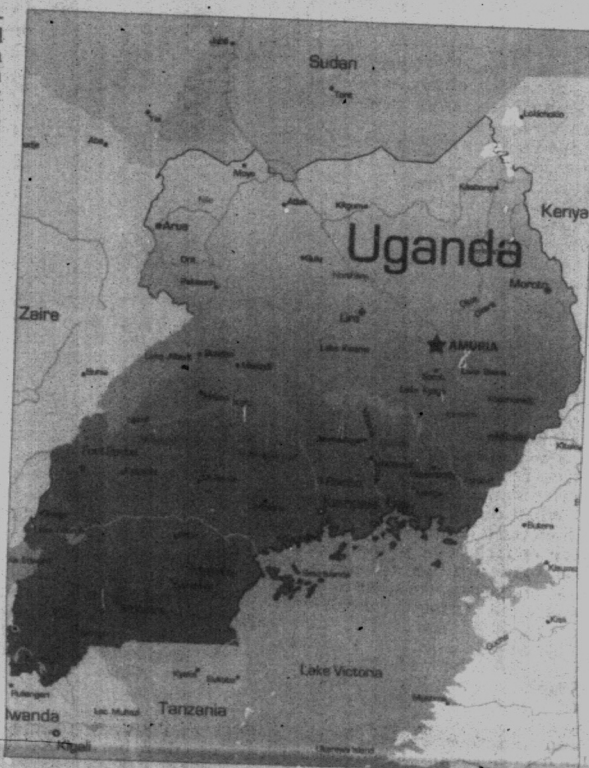
A month later on Jan 2, Muslims ambushed Edweu when he arrived for a devotion at the church in Amuria, about 170 miles north of Kampala. Six masked men grabbed Edweu and demanded that he reveal the whereabouts of the sheikh. Some of the gang began slapping and kicking Edweu. Others hit him with sticks.

"As I fell down, a vehicle with bright lights flashed which scared them away, and they disappeared into the nearby bush," Edweu told Morning Star. "The vehicle arrived and took me into the church compound. Inside the church building we found a letter with a threatening message: 'We are going to destroy your church unless you show us where [name withheld] is.'"

Area Muslims have reportedly been announcing the conversion weekly as they gather for mosque prayers. A local Christian resident told Morning Star News that on Fridays he has heard over the mosque loudspeaker, "[Name withheld] needs to die for forsaking Islam."

When converted, the sheikh had rushed up to the podium and fallen at the feet of Edweu, who stopped preaching and questioned the young man. As tears rolled down the sheikh's cheeks, he answered, "I was sent to come and attack, to kill the pastor and destroy the church," according to the pastor.

The Muslim repented in front of the congregation, Edweu prayed for him, and the would-be assassin put his faith in Christ as Lord and Savior, the pastor said.



By the numbers

About 85% of the people in Uganda are Christian and 11% Muslim, with some eastern areas having large Muslim populations. The country's constitution and other laws provide for religious freedom, including the right to propagate one's faith and convert from one faith to another, but Christians in eastern Uganda are suffering continual attacks by non-state figures.

Since the ambush, Edweu and his congregation fear more persecution could be imminent. The ambush was the latest in a series of anti-Christian attacks in eastern Uganda.

Also in eastern Uganda, Muslim relatives of 24-year-old Sandra Summaya coerced her into taking poison at a New Year's celebration, she said, because she accepted Christ at a Christmas worship service. Muslims in eastern Uganda beat Christians at a Christmas worship service and wrecked the home of a single mother on Christmas Eve, sources said.

This past December, relatives of a former Islamic teacher attacked his 60-year-old mother for becoming a Christian, wounding her head and breaking her hand, sources said. Aimuna Namutongi sustained a deep cut on her forehead. She and her son Malik Higinyi, whom Muslim relatives had beaten unconscious on Nov. 13 after he made a public profession of faith in Christ, managed to escape the attackers in December.

Namutongi had been converted through her son's testimony, a local source said.

Villagers recounted isolated attacks dating back to last June. About 85% of the people in Uganda are Christian and 11% Muslim, with some eastern areas having large Muslim populations. The country's constitution and other laws provide for religious freedom, including the right to propagate one's faith and convert from one faith to another, but Christians in eastern Uganda are suffering continual attacks by non-state figures.

Based on reporting by Morning Star News, a California-based independent news service focusing on the persecution of Christians worldwide.

Just for the Record



The Brotherhood of **GRIFFITH MEMORIAL CHURCH, JACKSON**, provided a Christmas meal and party for the patients, residents, and staff at the Mississippi State Hospital.

FIRST CHURCH, MADISON, is hosting Women's Winter Weekend Feb. 3-4, Fri., 6:30-8:30 p.m.; Sat., 9 a.m.-noon; Vicki Courtney, speaker; Sherry Carter, worship leader. Tickets for Friday are \$10; tickets for Saturday are \$20; weekend passes, \$25. Tickets available at www.FBCMAdison.org/womensministry or at (601) 856-6177. Shown is the planning committee.

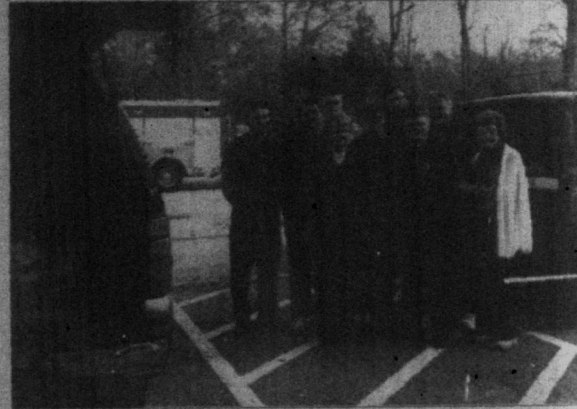


The RA's from **CALVARY CHURCH, BRAXTON**, spent two days raking yards for a widow. Shown are Edward Stevens, Jody Stevens, Justin Johns, Wyatt Hickman, and RA leader Willie Johns.

TUCKERS CROSSING CHURCH, LAUREL, and the Glade volunteer Fire and Rescue team partnered to deliver food items to families in the Glade/Tuckers Crossing area for the second year. Michelle Rowell, assistant fire chief, and Carolyn Hollifield, Tuckers Crossing, coordinated the effort. Eddie Bryant, pastor.



Ladies from **STRONG HOPE CHURCH, WESSON**, collected 436 blankets for Socks for Heroes from church members and the surrounding community. These were delivered to four Veterans nursing homes in the state. Robin Risher, pastor.



CALHOUN CHURCH, HOT COFFEE, presented O Come Let Us Adore Him. Shown, front, are Landon Keyes; second row, Nelda Keyes, Victoria Coats, Joan Dees, Mary Coats, and Cindy Hall; third row, Michael Coats, pastor Daryl Coats, and George Hensarling.



The adult choir, youth, and children of **HICKORY GROVE CHURCH, LAMAR**, presented the Christmas musical, O Holy Night, Dec. 11.



CORNERSTONE CHURCH, GREENVILLE, ordained Willie Way as deacon Jan. 22. He is shown with his wife Virginia and senior pastor Jack Manor.



NEW HOPE CHURCH, FOXWORTH, ordained Ben White as deacon Jan. 15. Shown are White, Leigh White, and pastor Tim Parker.

VP Pence: Life is 'winning again'

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — U.S. Vice President Mike Pence declared, "Life is winning again in America," in his historic appearance Jan. 27 before a massive March for Life pro-life crowd that included a contingent of Southern Baptists attending the Evangelicals for Life conference.

Sworn in as vice president only a week before, Pence became the first person holding that office to speak in person at the March for Life in its 44-year history. No U.S. president has ever attended the annual event.

Pence's appearance, as well as promises and actions by the administration of new U.S. President Donald Trump, seemed to provide a heightened level of optimism among the marchers. The Republican President signed an executive order Jan. 23 to reinstate the so-called Mexico City Policy, a ban on federal funds going to international organizations that perform or promote abortions overseas. Immediate past U.S. President Barack Obama, a Democrat, had previously issued an executive order crippling enforcement of the policy.

Trump also had promised during last year's election campaign to work to defund Planned Parenthood and enact a permanent, government-wide ban on federal funding of abortions, something the House of Representatives voted to do Jan. 24.

U.S. Senator Roger Wicker, a Republican from Mississippi, is one of three sponsors of the bill. Republican Thad Cochran, Mississippi's other U.S. Senator, is listed as a co-sponsor.

Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville, said he again was honored to march with pro-life Americans

and urged evangelical Christians to become more involved in the event.

"This is an important moment each year for advocates of human dignity, and our gathering this year sent another message to Washington and beyond that unborn life matters," said Moore. "I'm thankful for this generation's stand for life, and my prayer is that what this march stands for will soon not be known as a movement, but as a consensus."

Moore told Baptist Press in written comments, "It's imperative for evangelical Christians to be part of this march. We are, after all, committed to the Good News of everlasting life. We should march to show that every life has dignity and also that Jesus offers forgiveness for every sin, freely offered to everyone, no matter what he or she has done."

In his speech at the pre-march rally, Pence told the crowd gathered on the grounds of the Washington Monument, "[B]ecause of all of you, and the many thousands that stand with us in marches like this all across the nation, life is winning again in America."

Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president, also spoke of the hope among pro-life Americans.

"This is a new day, a new dawn for life," she said, adding it is "a time of incredible promise" for the pro-life movement.

Pence urged pro-lifers to be compassionate toward all Americans. "We have come to an historic moment in the cause for life, and we must meet this moment with respect and compassion for every American," said the former congressman and former governor of Indiana.

He quoted Phil. 4:5 in encouraging the pro-life movement to demonstrate "respect for the dignity and worth of every person."



TRUE LOVE — Retired bivocational pastor L.C. Jones and his wife Jerry, married in 1947, are depicted in these undated photographs. GuideStone Financial Resources' Mission:Dignity ministry has helped the couple and thousands more retired servants of God meet financial needs after retirement. (BP submitted photo)

Mission:Dignity at work in faithful servants' lives

DALLAS (BP) — Hard work was nothing new for bivocational pastor L.C. Jones. After decades of laboring in sewing factories, he was accustomed to sweating it out for the sake of his family.

"I've worked all summer mowing yards, trying to save enough money to fix my wife's teeth," he said. "I plan to work next summer to finish paying for her teeth."

That was in 2012. The blazing Texas heat wasn't going to hold him back from earning enough so that Jerry could get her teeth, even though the retired pastor was then 86 years old.

L.C. and Jerry were married in March 1947. Four years later, they came to faith in Christ and then answered a call to ministry in 1952. Prairie Grove Church in Texas was their first church, and it had only 30 members. Greenwood Church in Weatherford, Texas, with an average attendance of 75, was probably the largest in their 43 years of service together.

"Most of my pastorates were bivocational," L.C. recalled. "Some churches could hardly pay a small amount and none of them could contribute to a retirement plan. I never pastored any church — never considered any church — based on what money they paid. I just took what they offered and that satisfied me."

"Moving from one place to another, I had to take whatever work I could find to support my family. That was just a fact. Most of the time, I worked in sewing factories as a maintenance man. In those days, no matter what

"Some churches could hardly pay a small amount and none of them could contribute to a retirement plan. I never pastored any church — never considered any church — based on what money they paid. I just took what they offered and that satisfied me."

L.C. Jones
retired pastor

town you went to, there was a sewing factory."

By 2012, there were no more pastorates for the Joneses, no more sewing factories, and no extra money available for dental work except what L.C. earned that summer mowing yards. That's what prompted him to share his story about Mission:Dignity, GuideStone Financial Resources' ministry to supplement the incomes of retired pastors and their widows.

Mission:Dignity responded with an emergency grant that helped provide for her dental work and other medical bills. It was in addition to the regular monthly assistance the couple had been receiving since 1999.

L.C. remembered how their grant started. "My wife saw an article in our state Baptist paper years ago about help for pastors like me. We applied and started receiving help. That made a lot of difference in our lives. We could

stop at Dairy Queen and get a hamburger occasionally."

The extra resources still make a difference for L.C. since Jerry's death two years ago. "I get a \$913 Social Security check, and it's hard to live on that," he said. "Sometimes you have different occasions come up when you'd like to go out and eat or something, but you can't do that on \$913 a month."

Mission:Dignity assists more than 1,800 retired Southern Baptist ministers and workers or their widows in need. Individuals who meet guidelines for income, assets, and years of paid Southern Baptist service are eligible for \$225 per month. Couples receive \$300 per month. The amounts are \$450 per month and \$600 per month for the neediest people like the Joneses who have at least 25 years of Southern Baptist ministry.

For some, Mission:Dignity means being able to get much-needed medical care they might not otherwise obtain. For others, it covers the cost of groceries, utilities, or other necessities — even a hamburger once in a while. The ministry is an expression of the care and compassion of their Southern Baptist family served by Mission:Dignity recipients in decades past.

"I'm more thankful for the opportunity to pastor than I am for the help I receive," L.C. said. "It was a privilege to be the pastor for these people. I may not remember all of them, but I haven't forgotten pastoring them."

For more information, go to MissionDignity.org.



MARCHING FOR LIFE — Staff members of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and Focus on the Family, among others, gather for the March for Life Jan. 27 in the midst of the Evangelicals for Life conference. (BP photo courtesy of Josh Shank/Rocket Republic)

IMB trustee resigns amid legal filing disagreement

NASHVILLE (BP and local reports) — Ongoing controversy over Southern Baptist involvement in a federal court case concerning religious liberty for Muslims has prompted an International Mission Board (IMB) trustee to resign in protest and sparked a revision of the IMB process for submitting friend of the court briefs.

Dean Haun, pastor of First Church in Morristown, Tenn., resigned from the IMB trustee board in November based on his conviction that IMB, based in Richmond, Va., should not have joined a

HAUN

friend of the court brief last May supporting the Islamic Society of Basking Ridge, N.J., (ISBR) in its religious discrimination lawsuit against a local planning board.

A friend of the court brief — referenced in legal terminology with the Latin phrase *amicus curiae* brief — allows a person or organization which is not a party to a lawsuit to interject legal arguments reflecting concern over precedent the Court's decision may establish.

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville and its president, Bilal-born Russell Moore, have also come under fire for joining the brief.

The Baptist and Reflector news journal of the Tennessee Baptist Convention (TBC) reported Haun's resignation Jan. 23, and at least three other Baptist state papers have published the report written by editor Lonnie Wilkey.

Amid continuing discussion, IMB President David Platt released a statement to Baptist Press noting, "As a result of discussions among IMB trustees and staff over recent months, we have revised our processes for our legal department filing any future amicus briefs. IMB leaders are committed in the days ahead to speak only into situations that are directly tied to our mission."

"Clyde Meador, retired executive advisor to Platt, told Baptist Press that IMB joined the ISBR amicus brief in an effort to support the USA's foundational principle of religious freedom" and "to support Baptist

partners and others around the world who seek permission to construct church buildings."

In December, U.S. district judge Michael A. Shipp, an appointee of former U.S. President Barack Obama to the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey in Trenton, ruled the Planning Board of Bernards Township, N.J., violated federal law when it required the ISBR to include more than twice as much parking in its site plan for a proposed mosque as it required for local Christian and Jewish houses of worship.

The amicus brief argued the Planning Board violated the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, which protects religious institutions from discrimination in zoning laws. In his ruling, Shipp acknowledged the friend of the court brief joined by IMB and ERLC and stated the brief "supports" the ISBR's arguments that unlawful religious discrimination occurred.

Haun, a former TBC president, told Baptist Press resigning from the IMB trustees "was one of the most heart-wrenching decisions that I've ever had to make in my ministry, because I feel like I've been a faithful Southern Baptist all my life."

First Church, Morristown, took up its normal Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions in December, Haun said, out of a desire to continue to support IMB missionaries. The congregation is escrowing funds it would have given through the Cooperative Program, the Baptist and Reflector reported, and "praying about their long-term response" to the action of the IMB and ERLC.

Records indicate the church continues to support TBC ministries. Haun cited two reasons for his resignation: ■ The amicus brief "at least borders on" an "unholy alliance" with followers of a religion that denies both the deity and the atonement of Jesus. ■ Joining the brief does not comport with the IMB's stated mission and purpose.

Haun said Scripture forbids "unholy alliances" in 2 Cor. 6:14-15. The brief supports Muslims in their effort to construct a house of false worship, Haun pointed out.

"I don't think the IMB advocates the same doctrine as the Muslims," Haun said, "but I do think that [2 Cor. author, the Apostle] Paul warns us about making these unholy alliances

and I think that's where we're scripturally on the edge."

Regarding the IMB's mission and purpose, Haun said, "I understand the religious liberty aspect of the entire argument but I do not understand why the International Mission Board, with our mission to reach the world for Christ, would have to jump into the fray of a mosque being built in New Jersey."

While Haun was still an IMB trustee, he contacted Platt with this concern and the amicus brief was addressed at a confidential "trustee forum" in August, the Baptist and Reflector reported.

Problems abroad?

Meador, who retired from IMB in May, said in written comments the amicus brief "speaks to a matter closely related to International Mission Board work around the world. In a great many countries, especially but not exclusively Muslim-majority countries, Baptist churches with whom missionaries work find it very difficult if not impossible to receive permission to build church buildings."

The IMB's worldwide Baptist partners "emphasize the basic principle of religious freedom" in "seeking to obtain building permits," Meador said. While religious freedom in the U.S. does "not necessarily" persuade other nations to grant similar freedom, "contrary action by the USA would be quite persuasive."

"Should it be clear that the USA does not uphold its principle of religious freedom when applied to the building of mosques, an excuse is readily available to any Muslim or other opposing country to deny the building of church buildings," Meador said.

The Southern Baptist Convention's Baptist Faith and Message, Article XVII, affirms, "Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others... The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power."

The preamble to the Baptist Faith and Message notes "Baptists cherish and defend religious liberty." The full content of the Baptist Faith and Message can be viewed at sbc.net/bfm2000/bfm2000.asp.

IMB speaks out

A statement on the IMB's website at imb.org notes, "IMB's specific interest in the brief arises out of the belief that all peoples of the world have the right to religious liberty... The IMB is responsible for carrying out its ministry consistent with the entirety of the Baptist Faith and Message, not only the portions related to sharing the Gospel."

Platt cited the Baptist Faith and Message in his statement to Baptist Press and noted, "We continue to affirm that everyone should be able to freely worship according to their religious convictions."

Platt continued, "At the same time, our primary purpose as an organization is to partner with churches to empower limitless missionary teams who are evangelizing, discipling, planting, and multiplying healthy churches, and training leaders among unreached peoples and places for the glory of God."

Out of a commitment to "speak only into situations that are directly tied to our mission," IMB leaders have revised their process for filing amicus briefs, Platt noted. He also expressed gratitude for Haun's trustee service.

Meador told Baptist Press he did not know the former or current IMB protocol for joining amicus briefs. The IMB's legal department was not available to

explain its protocol before publication deadline for this story.

The ERLC told Baptist Press in an e-mail it "did not ask anyone to sign on" to the brief.

The ISBR amicus brief states it was filed by attorneys with the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty in Washington, D.C.; the New York City law firm of Reich and Paolella; and the Center for Islam and Religious Freedom in Washington, D.C.


No attorneys paid with Cooperative Program (CP) funds are listed as having prepared the brief.

Neither IMB nor ERLC has publicly indicated any intention to withdraw from the amicus brief.

Following Shipp's Decem-

ber ruling and earlier satirical fake news stories on the Internet claiming Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) dollars were being used to construct mosques, Nashville-based SBC Executive Committee President Frank S. Page noted CP funds have never been requested "for the construction of any non-Christian house of worship; not would we agree to such a request."

PAGE



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WMU

cont. from p. 1

The HEART (Humanitarian Emergency Aid for Rebuilding Tomorrow) grant will be used to purchase gift cards for each of the 30 MKs as well as international students identified as having been affected by the tornado's Jan. 21 devastation at the university in Hattiesburg. Weather officials have classified the twister as an EF3 (spc.noaa.gov/efscale).

"My first thought after witnessing the vast destruction in my community was that the HEART Fund was there for just such a crisis as this," said Linda Donnell, WMU Foundation board member and regional coordinator in Hattiesburg for Christian Women's Job Corps/Christian Men's Job Corps, a ministry of the national and Miss. WMU offices.

The tornado killed at least four people near the school as it crossed several counties and then moved into Alabama and Georgia, sowing more death and destruction in its path.

Donnell said she was particularly concerned for the

MKs and international students who are so far from home. "I am hoping that attention can be directed toward their needs," she said.

"This grant will have a huge impact on their lives," said Cindy Townsend, executive director of Miss. WMU/Women's Ministries and also a member of the WMU Foundation board of trustees. "We have an amazing Southern Baptist network to minister during great times of need. Mississippi Baptists, in particular Miss. WMU/W, have sought to meet the needs of the William Carey MKs and international students."

Linda Cooper, national WMU president, stated, "My prayer is that the lives of those affected will see the love of Jesus in our grant, for He is the source of our every need."

In the midst of the destruction, Donnell hopes the victims will not get discouraged. "I pray that they will not lose hope for a better tomorrow," she said.

The WMU Foundation is accepting donations to the HEART Fund for disaster relief online at wmufoundation.com or by mail to WMU Foundation HEART Fund, 100 Missionary Ridge, Birmingham, AL 35242.

REBUILDING

cont. from p. 1

The medical school's anatomy lab was taken down earlier this week. A building on Tuscan Avenue that housed one of the university art galleries and student apartments also will have to be removed.

King estimated that by the time fall semester starts in August, all the buildings that can be saved will be repaired and ready for use. Plans are also underway for replacing the COM anatomy lab, adding new dorms, and constructing a new Tatum Court.

Meanwhile, the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force was immediately activated after the storm and provided over 25,000 meals from its mass feeding unit based at First Church, Petal. Cleanup and chainsaw teams associated with the task force were also sent to the area.

Don Gann, task force coordinator and director of men's ministry at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), said the task force is currently transitioning its activation from the relief phase to the rebuild phase. Details on the long-term rebuild effort will be released in the Record and on the convention board's web site, mbcb.org.

Individuals and churches are encouraged to support the overall relief efforts by giving through MBCB (designate the check for Miss. Baptist Disaster Relief). For those wishing to earmark a donation for WCU, they may still send it through MBCB (designated for WCU Relief).

Donations are being received on-line at www.mbc.org or at MBCB, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Alternatively,



UPENDED — Along with millions of dollars in property damage caused by a massive EF3 tornado that tore through the William Carey University campus in Hattiesburg on Jan. 21, more than 150 automobiles were damaged or destroyed by the twister — nearly every vehicle parked in the open. University officials have announced plans to remain open and begin the rebuilding process at the school, which is affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention. (Photo by Davi Faria)

How can I help?

Donations are being received on-line at www.mbc.org or at MBCB, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Alternatively, WCU support may be sent directly to the university at WCU, 498 Tuscan Ave., Hattiesburg, MS 39401 (designated "Disaster Fund").

In-kind donations such as non-perishable food, shoes, clothing, and gift cards are currently not being accepted through MBCB.

WCU support may be sent directly to the university at WCU, 498 Tuscan Ave., Hattiesburg, MS 39401 (designated "Disaster Fund").

In-kind donations such as non-perishable food, shoes, clothing, and gift cards are currently not being accepted through MBCB.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Truth is not relative.

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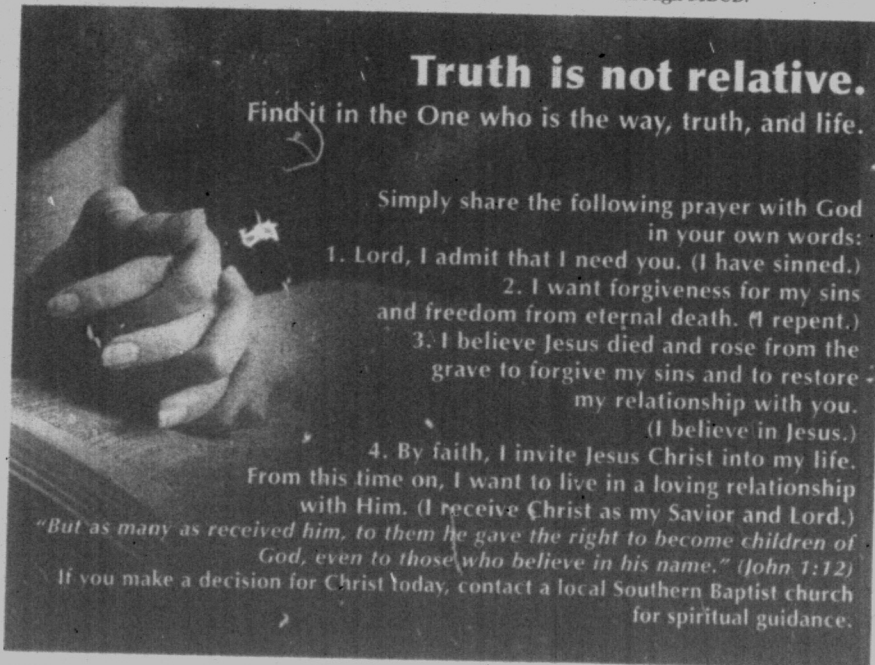
Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



THE VILLAGE VIEW



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www.baptistchildrensvillage.com

GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals want to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor with love and respect those who live and have lived special lives. Our special friends:

DECEMBER 16-31

HONORS

Drew & Lydia Laster
Ms. Elise Watson
Jeremy & Paige Lewis
Ms. Courtney Welborn
Balfour & Mary Elizabeth Lipscomb
Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
Mr. & Mrs. Barry Loy
Barney & Paula Albritton
Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Loy
Barney & Paula Albritton
Ms. Naomi Magers
Mr. & Mrs. Fred F. Roberts, Jr.
Rev. & Mrs. Allen Mapp
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Pong
Mark, Jamie & Eason Mathis
Mr. & Mrs. Alan C. Hurdle
Shirley McCraw
Ladies SSC, Bethany FBC
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry McDonald
Barney & Paula Albritton
Matt & Jamie Mills
Ms. Elise Watson
Sean A. Milner
Mr. & Mrs. Andy Hardin
Mr. & Mrs. Craig Royston
Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Alan Storey
Ms. Jeanette D. Kirby
Sean A. & Elizabeth Milner
Mr. & Mrs. James M. Duff
Ms. Emily F. Simmons
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Moak
Mr. & Mrs. Ron D. Craddock
Mrs. J. T. Morrison
Mr. & Mrs. Jack A. Morrison
Rev. & Mrs. Peyton Myers
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Pong
Mrs. Doris Neely
Rev. & Mrs. R. L. Sigrest
Harold Newcomb
Harold & Lisa Newcomb
Charles H. (Chip) Oswalt
Jessica Oswalt & Ken Hunter

Mr. & Mrs. Luis Paredes
Mr. & Mrs. Ron D. Craddock
Jana Parish
Ms. Peggy A. Dendy
Mr. & Mrs. Philip Patrick
Mr. & Mrs. Ron D. Craddock
Mr. & Mrs. Gwendell Pearson
Mrs. E. J. Grisham, Sr.
Mr. Bill Perry
Mrs. Miriam Riggins
Mr. & Mrs. Scott Pong & Family
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Pong
Katherine Prentiss
Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
Dale & Susan Pressler
Harold & Lisa Newcomb
Ms. Becky Rawls
Barney & Paula Albritton
Miriam Riggins
Mr. & Mrs. Bill G. Lambert
Mr. & Mrs. Marty Roberts
Barney & Paula Albritton
The Women of Rome FBC
Ms. Janice V. Saffey
Mr. & Mrs. Rodney Rumbley & Family
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Pong
Stan & Flo Sharp
Harold & Lisa Newcomb
Margaret Williams Sherwood
Ms. Nellie Ellington
Jim & Christy Simpson
Ms. Elise Watson
Lona Southerland
Ms. Ann Southerland
Keith & Barbara Starnett
Dr. & Mrs. J. M. Brock
Dr. Ruthie Stevenson
Dr. Gerald J. Hasselman
Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Stewart & Family
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Pong
Mr. & Mrs. B. Frank Stokes
Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
Bill & Belinda Stokes
Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
Jim & Seralee Stokes

Dr. & Mrs. Victor L. Walsh
Karen Swain
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DECEMBER 16-31

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The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian-family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

Timid Warrior • Judges 6:11-16, 25-32

Who is the Angel of the Lord? What in the world is a terebinth tree? Who were those folks called Midianites? How does God mold His people into mature believers? Let's consider the role of Judge Gideon and answer these questions.

According to Judges 6:1-2 (NKJV), "The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, and the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel." Once again the Israelites had turned away from the Lord to worship other gods. Therefore, the Lord allowed the Israelites to be overtaken. The Children of Israel finally cried out to the Lord for help (v. 7) and He sent Gideon.

First, let's answer our questions. In verse 11, we read about the Angel of the Lord, the terebinth tree, and the Midianites. Who is the Angel of the Lord? At first thought, he is an angel bringing a message from the Lord. However, a second theory exists. Some believe that the Angel of the Lord is actually a visitation by the pre-incarnate Christ, better known as a Christophany.

While Deborah found shade under a palm tree, the Angel of the Lord sat under a terebinth tree. The terebinth tree was a broad-leaved tree that provided shade in the warm weather and lost its leaves in the cooler weather. This tree also was called a turpentine tree because of its strong-smelling sap.

The third question refers to the origin of the Midianites. While the Israelites were descendants of Isaac and the Ishmaelites were descendants of Ishmael, the Midianites were the descendants of another of Abraham's sons. Following Sarah's death, Abraham married Keturah. She bore six sons including Midian. His descendants were the Midianites.

How does God mold His people into mature believers? God molds His people into mature believers through acts of service to Him. When God called him, Gideon was timid and insecure. Through acts of obedience and service to God, Gideon matured into a "mighty man of valor" (v. 12).

Unsure and Untested – Judges 6:11-16

God called an insecure Gideon to be His great warrior judge. Gideon's initial response was filled with questions. First, he questioned God's power and ability to use him to defeat the Midianites. Then he questioned his own abilities. He said, "O my Lord, how

can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (v. 15). God promised His presence and assured Gideon of victory. He said, "Peace be with you; do not fear, you shall not die" (v. 23). Gideon built an altar there as a marker of God's assurance. He named it "The Lord Is Peace," also known as Jehovah Shalom."

A First Step – Judges 6:25-27

God directed Gideon to his first act of service. God told Gideon to tear down the altar to Baal and offer a sacrifice to Him in the same location. Gideon took 10 men with him at night and did as God had directed him.

A Father's Defense – Judges 6:28-32

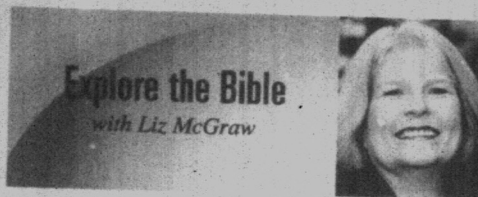
Having discovered the destruction of the Baal idol, the men of the city initiated an investigation and discovered Gideon had destroyed it. They asked for Gideon's father, Joash, to hand Gideon over to them for execution. Joash mockingly challenged the

men, calling on Baal to defend his altar if he was really worthy. Joash changed Gideon's name to Jerubbaal to mark the destruction of the altar of Baal.

Having passed his first test, Gideon's faith became a little stronger. However, he was still unsure. When God called Gideon to lead an attack on the enemy, Gideon asked God for a sign. Recognizing Gideon's timidity, God confirmed His call through Gideon's fleece. Gideon obeyed God and gathered a mighty army. Then God stretched Gideon a bit farther by cutting the army of thirty-two thousand down to only three hundred men. With his small band of warriors and God on his side, Gideon defeated the Midianites. Through each act of service to the Lord, Gideon matured and became a mighty warrior and judge.

Gideon's story is a wonderful word of encouragement and assurance for us because we are reminded that God often uses weak and imperfect people to bring about His purposes. He knows they will have a greater dependence upon Him. God molds His people into mature believers through acts of service to Him. Believers grow in their faith by being obedient to God.

McGraw is development director of Crossroads SW Counseling Center, a conference speaker, life coach, and member of Woodville Church.



Explore the Bible
with Liz McGraw

Folowing with Joy • Philippians 2:1-11

"Love?" What does Paul mean by "love" when he says, "if any consolation of love," in the Holman Christian Standard Bible translation of Philippians 2:1. King James translates this praise from that first verse of the second chapter this way, "if any comfort from his (Christ's) love."

This statement about comfort from Christ reminds me of praying with a family just before a funeral when I have often said "Our only real comfort comes from God through Jesus." My hope is that such a statement will point the grieving family to Christ's love. This real hope is related to the theme of Paul's epistle to the Philippians explaining "Joy."

So again I say, "Love?" To understand the passage we study today we need to seek to understand what the Apostle is writing about when he says love. Our friends who are Greek scholars would want us to know the Greek word here is "agape" and they would say this is God like love. This is the word love in 1 John 4:8 "God is love." But a Greek word doesn't speak to me in the deepest levels of my heart language.

Love is emotional (maybe even romantic), deeply real, spiritual. Certainly, Paul's use of love providing comfort has deep meaning. The young mother seeking to give her all to her young child (baby), striving completely to meet his

every need points us in the right direction to explain why Christ's love would comfort Paul's readers (this includes us if we are reading this portion of scripture that Paul wrote). Maybe, you have never been a young mother. And you like I need another example of love to speak to you through your experience. All of our examples, even though we can find many fall short of Christ's totally consoling love.

Have you experienced or seen the love of the young Christian couple just



Bible Studies for Life
with Don Hicks

married or perhaps engaged to be married soon and totally convinced that it is God's perfect will that they marry. Or maybe, if the couple has been married many years – 48 or 50 or 60 or more, and are still convinced that they are one because of God's leadership into his perfect will. The writer of Proverbs talks of this kind of love when he says, "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, ... She will do him good and not evil

all the days of her life," Proverbs 31:10-12 (KJV). Then continuing in verse 25 "Strength and honor are her clothing, ... She opens her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. ... Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

I can begin to understand this description of love that would comfort in any situation. It matches my experience and gives me greater hope when I realize the love of Christ is even better, more complete.

Paul tells the Philippian church that this kind of love and encouragement that should be practiced in the church. "Having the same love, sharing the same feelings, focusing on one goal. ... but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. ... Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus," Philippians 2:2-5 (HCSB). Paul's challenge to "Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus" turns out

to be a very demanding challenge. "Instead He (God's One and Only Son) emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men," Philippians 2:7a (HCSB). Paul says, "He humbled Himself," verse 8a. Since humbling ourselves is such a major task isn't it reassuring that today's Bible Study passage began telling us of the encouragement that comes through Christ.

Christ "humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death – even to death on a cross," Philippians 2:8 (HCSB). We have salvation available because of this act of love by Christ Jesus. In ecstasy, Paul almost shouted, "For this reason God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name," Philippians 2:9 (HCSB). Explaining Jesus' exalted name and the joy we have in Jesus' total victory Paul paraphrases Isaiah 45:23 saying:

"So that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow – of those who are in heaven and on the earth and under the earth – and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," Philippians 2:10-11 (HCSB).

Hicks is associational missions director for Jasper Association in Bay Springs.

Churches answer perennial Super Bowl question

NASHVILLE (BP) — For churches with Sunday night activities, most pastors say it's still "game on" despite the much-anticipated Super Bowl LI matchup this Sunday evening between the New England Patriots and Atlanta Falcons of the National Football League.

According to a new study from LifeWay Research, the polling arm of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, 68% of Protestant pastors say their church typically has some activity on normal Sunday nights throughout the year. Among those pastors, 59% say they will continue as normal on the night of the big game.

"It is easy to think everyone is watching the game," said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research, "but even during the Super Bowl, millions of Americans are doing other things that are important to them. For many, that includes attending church."

Super Bowl LI kickoff is set for 5:30 p.m., which is prime time for Sunday evening church activities in Baptist churches.

While most churches plan to carry on as usual, other pastors say they will make some types of adjustments on Super Bowl Sunday. Twenty-four percent say they change things to include watching the game. Another 12% adjust their Sunday night plans in other ways. Only five percent of churches that normally have activities on Sunday evenings plan to cancel them entirely.

According to the CBS television network, which broadcast the 2016 Super Bowl, 167 million viewers watched all or part of the game. This made it the most watched TV broadcast in history, drawing in 52% of the U.S. population to watch at least part of the Denver Broncos' 24-10 victory over the Carolina Panthers.

Having more than half of the country watch the Super Bowl creates an issue for churches that usually have activities scheduled during that time.

"While Christians believe the truth does not change, we recognize practices often do," McConnell said. "Churches face a difficult task of navigating between wanting to remain countercultural and still reaching the culture. In this study, we find churches coming to different conclusions for their congregation and local context."

Pastors of churches with fewer than 100 in attendance are likely to move forward without disruption on Super Bowl Sunday. Sixty-eight percent of those pastors said their church's activities would go on as usual. Churches with 100 or more were much more split, with 52% continuing as normal.

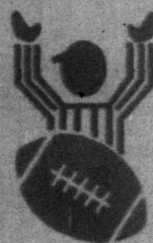
"The overall percentage continuing normal Sunday evening activities is driven by smaller churches," McConnell said.

Pastors in the Northeast (53%) and Midwest (51%) are less likely to continue normal Sunday night services than those in the South (65%). Those in the Northeast (18%) are twice as likely to say they plan to adjust Sunday night activities in other ways than pastors in the South (nine percent).

There is also an age gap. Pastors age 65 and older are the most likely to say they are continuing with normal Sunday night activities (75%) and the least likely to say they plan to make adjustments to include watching the game (11%).

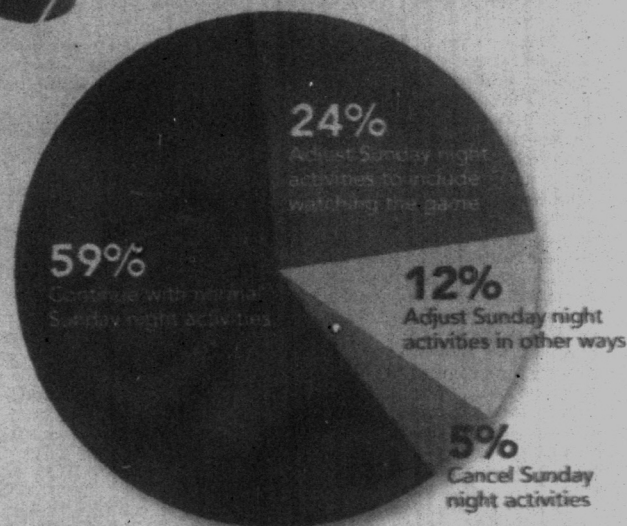
Meanwhile, pastors ages 18-44 are more likely to cancel Sunday night activities (eight percent) compared to those 65 and older (two percent).

Some denominations are more likely than others to continue as normal. Majorities of pastors of Church of Christ (78%), Baptist (65%), and Pentecostal (65%) say they will have regular activities. Fewer than half of Lutheran (41%) and Methodist (34%) pastors say the same.



Among Protestant Pastors'

Does your church typically continue, cancel, or adjust Sunday night activities on Super Bowl Sunday?



*Responses only from pastors whose churches typically conduct Sunday night activities.

"The church is one of the few places in our country where people in a community still gather together each week, but the Super Bowl has become an event that also brings groups together," McConnell said.

"Churches are faced with a choice: Do we want to compete with the game, incorporate it somehow, or ignore it? There's no consensus answer among Protestant pastors."

'Gray divorce,' disease on rise among older people

NASHVILLE (BP) — Increasing rates of divorce and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among some populations over 50 could raise challenges for pastors ministering to senior adults in the coming years, warn studies from two countries.

In December, England's chief medical officer Sally Davies reported a 38% increase in STIs among Britons ages 50-70, The Telegraph reported. Meanwhile, U.S. researchers at Bowling Green State University in Kentucky say the divorce rate for Americans 50 and older has doubled since 1990 — even though the overall U.S. divorce rate has remained essentially unchanged in the same time period.

Kenneth Long, pastor of First Church in Sun City, Az., a well-known retirement community that requires a minimum age of 55, told Baptist Press the biggest challenge in his ministry field among both professing Christians and nonbelievers is senior adults living together without being married.

Senior adult cohabitation seems to occur because of loneliness and financial needs, Long said. "One or the other has retirement they might lose if they remarried, so they're choosing to [cohabitate] for financial reasons



Photo by Iakov Filimonov/Shutterstock.com

rather than getting married for spiritual reasons."

Davies' 2016 chief medical officer report on public health noted that in the United Kingdom, there were 15,726 new STI diagnoses in 2014 among adults ages 50-70, compared with 11,366 in 2010.

Rising divorce rates lead to older adults "re-partnering and potentially

having sex with new partners," Davies' report stated, according to The Telegraph. Some likely engage in unprotected sexual activity because they believe pregnancy is not a risk, the report observes.

Although "society's prevailing view still considers that older people are not particularly sexually active," the report stated, the rise in STIs likely is fueled by "changing social and behavioral patterns" among those who reached adulthood in the 1960s.

Mark Regnerus, a University of Texas sociologist, told Baptist Press that U.S. rates of some STIs "are increasing among older folks, sometimes quite dramatically." Still, the raw number of older adults with STIs is relatively small, "and always the baseline rates and frequencies are much lower than [with] younger people."

A more significant trend among older Americans, Regnerus said, is a "major comparative uptick" in so-called gray divorce.

"I think there is a combination of things that created" the rise in divorce among older Americans, Regnerus said in an email. There is "more wealth among this era of senior citizens (or at least people over 50) than

in earlier generations, yet with social scripts that: (1) raise expectations for long-term marital satisfaction, and (2) have made divorce more accepted socially (and religiously)."

"Also, corrosive effects of social media [aid] in fostering discontent as well as building social support for decisions people have made to leave," he added.

A 2013 research paper by Bowling Green State professors Susan Brown and I-Fen Lin noted a "gray divorce revolution" in America. Brown is co-director of the university's National Center for Family & Marriage Research.

Between 1990 and 2010, the divorce rate for Americans ages 50-64 increased from 6.9 to 13.1 divorced persons per 1,000 married persons, Brown and Lin wrote. The increase for those ages 65 and older jumped from 1.8 to 4.8 per 1,000 married persons.

In 1990, fewer than one in 10 divorced people were over age 50, Brown and Lin wrote. Today more than one in four divorcees are among people over age 50. If the divorce rate holds, more than 828,000 Americans over age 50 will be divorced by 2030. In 2010, the number was reported to be about 643,000.